

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-20 /094 W
-----095716 080523Z /12

R 071010Z JUNE 78
FM AMCONSUL DURBAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2944
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY MASERU

UNCLAS DURBAN 0343

CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, SGEN, SF (TRANSKEI)
SUBJECT: MANTANZIMA DETAINS METHODIST CLERICS; MOVES TO LEGALIZE
POLYGAMY

REF: DURBAN 317

1. TRANSKEI PRIME MINISTER KAISER MATANZIMA HAS BEGUN
IMPLEMENTATION OF HIS BAN ON THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTH
AFRICA IN TRANSKEI BY DETAINING AT LEAST ONE METHODIST CLERIC,
REV. OSBORNE NGCATHSHE, FOR REFUSING TO JOIN THE NEW METHODIST
CHURCH OF TRANSKEI. TWO OTHER MINISTERS, REV. SILWANYANE
OF MARUBENI MISSION IN LIBODE AND REV. MPOSELWA, ARE MISSING AND
SUSPECTED TO BE IN DETENTION. REV. FADANA, OF RODE MISSION
IN MOUNT AYLIFF HAS REPORTEDLY FLED TO NATAL TO AVOID DETENTION.

2. THE LAW GIVING EFFECT TO THE NEW CHURCH BECAME EFFECTIVE
MAY 26 AND APPARENTLY MOST MINISTERS IN TRANSKEI HAVE RELUCTANTLY
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AGREED TO JOIN IT. HOWEVER THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH IN S.A., REV.
ABEL HENDRICKS CONDEMNED THE MOVE AND SAID THE NEW CHURCH
WOULD NOT BE RECOGNIZED BY THE WORLD. HE ALSO WARNED ANY
MINISTERS JOINING THE NEW CHURCH THEY WILL BE TREATED AS IF
THEY HAVE RESIGNED FROM THE METHODIST CHURCH.

3. THE PRACTICAL EFFECT OF THE ACTION DECLARING THE METHODIST CHURCH OF S.A. AN "UNDESIRABLE" ORGANIZATION, UNDER A LAW PASSED ONLY THE DAY BEFORE THE PROCLAMATION, WAS TO EMPOWER THE GOT TO SEIZE ALL THE ASSETS (PROPERTY AND MONEY) OF THE CHURCH IN TRANSKEI AND TO PROHIBIT CHURCH MEMBERS FROM ASSOCIATING TO THEMSELVES WITH THE CHURCH IN S.A. MATANZIMA IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THE CHURCH IN S.A. HAS ENRICHED ITSELF THROUGH DRAINING MONEY FROM THE CHURCH IN TRANSKEI AND THE LOCAL CHURCH WOULD THEREFORE BE FINANCIALLY STRONGER AFTER THE MOVE. THIS WAS DISPUTED BY CHURCHMEN IN S.A. WHO CONTEND THE CHURCH IN TRANSKEI HAD LONG BEEN SUPPORTED BY THE S.A. CHURCH AS A WHOLE AND THE MEMBERS IN TRANSKEI WOULD HAVE TO PAY MORE TO THE CHURCH AFTER THE BREAK.

4. ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR MATANZIMA'S ACTION IN BANNING THE CHURCH CAME TO LIGHT MAY 30 WHEN A BILL LEGALIZING POLYGAMY WAS INTRODUCED IN THE ASSEMBLY. THE BILL, WHICH MATANZIMA CALLED ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PASSED SINCE TRANSKEI OBTAINED SELF-GOVERNMENT IN 1963, WAS WARMLY ENDORSED BY THE MALE MEMBERS. MATANZIMA, A LAY METHODIST PREACHER, DENIED AN OPPOSITION CONTENTION HE INTENDED TO TAKE OTHER WIVES BUT SAID, UNDER THE NEW LAW, HE WOULD TAKE BACK INTO HIS HOUSE TWO WIVES HE HAD DIVORCED EARLIER, PAY LOBOLA (BRIDE-PRICE) FOR THEM AND ALLOW THEM TO LOOK AFTER THE CHILDREN THEY HAD BY HIM. HE ADDED, IN DEFENSE OF HIS APPARENT CONTRADICTION, THAT "I AM AN OLD MAN. I WILL JUST LOOK AT THEM." OPPOSITION LEADERS CHARGED THAT SINCE SUCH AN ACTION WAS SURE TO BE CONDEMNED

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BY THE METHODIST CHURCH, MATANZIMA HAD FOUND A CONVENIENT EXCUSE TO OUTLAW THE CHURCH BEFORE INTRODUCING THE POLYGAMY LEGISLATION.

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION, RELIGIOUS GROUPS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978DURBAN00343
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D780239-0121
Format: TEL
From: DURBAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197806111/aaaafmpw.tel
Line Count: 103
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON MICROFILM, TEXT ON-LINE
Message ID: 9b264f7e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 DURBAN 317
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2175025
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> srp 970822
Subject: MANTANZIMA DETAINS METHODIST CLERICS; MOVES TO LEGALIZE POLYGAMY
TAGS: PINT, SGEN, SHUM, SF, (MATANZIMA, KAISER)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9b264f7e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014